

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## A fine parade

Congratulations to chairman Bill Spielvogel and Acton firefighters are more than due for the outstanding Santa Claus parade and festivities on Saturday.

Despite the numbing cold thousands turned out to see the spectacle and they were rewarded with one of the best, if not the best, parade since it came under the firefighters' wing in 1985.

It was good to see so many participate in the parade. Community participation is the key to success and there was plenty of it Saturday showing Acton area has not lost its spirit.

The parade is always an opportunity for the fire fighters to show off their fire fighting equipment in the lead, followed closely by Acton Citizens' Band whom we depend on for so many events. What would we do without them? They are so much a part of the Acton scene.

The other bands who participated, the floats, the fairy tale characters, the clowns and of course, old Santa Claus who draws up the rear pulled by four spanking Percheron horses, because Santa's reindeer were not in form yet for their Christmas eve run - we loved them all.

Even a freight train thundering through couldn't ruin the ambience.

Officially the parade opened the Christmas season here, the Yule lights are up downtown, people are already decorating their homes to reflect the season, one of the happiest and busiest of the year. It's a fairyland for everyone but especially for the children whose enjoyment Saturday was evident along the entire route.

So we say thanks to Mr. Spielvogel and his fire fighter compatriots who each year organize and produce Santa's parade. Again, what would we do without you?

## Finding the answer

We are not among those who would castigate the Mike Harris government for placing advertisements and sending out brochures explaining what they are trying to do with Ontario's health system. If the information wasn't available from the government where would we get it? The public is really confused about.

We've heard a lot about hospital closings and the need for more money in the health system to eliminate line-ups for health care but little, if anything, about the government's intentions. Most of what we are being fed is from the political foes of the Tories whom, as their jobs dictate, are the opposition. It's their job to find the flaw in the system.

Both opposition parties have the ear of a lot of the media, print and broadcast, and have done their part in explaining the weaknesses of the system. Few, however, seem to have discovered any positive elements in the health system despite the government's claim to have committed over \$142 million in priority hospital programs.

We would suggest the government has fumbled the ball with the lack of explanation about what they are trying to do, besides save money. They have public relations disaster about their intentions, partly from their own ineptness and partly due to the opposition parties' ability to poke holes in the health system's weaknesses Premier Harris, in his trips around the province, has tried to mend fences. However, it is only lately he has grasped the immensity of the information vacuum from the government's side. So we welcome information about the government's intentions, self-serving as it may be.

Of course, no one is going to criticize their own policies. You leave that to the opposition. In any event, he has his work cut out from him.



THE GRADE 1 CLASS of 1964 at the M.Z. Bennett public school had their class photo taken in May of that year with their teacher Kathleen (Kay) Alger. Recognize anyone? Here's the names as supplied by Mrs. Alger who now resides in B.C. Back Row: (left to right), Kevin Evans, Peter Miller, Frankie Szabo, Carl Currie, Jeffrey Jobb, David Salt, Hector Daigle, Dennis Blake, Mrs. Alger. Centre Row: Ian Coats, Barry Allan, Maria Patak, Cathy Weldon, Lillian deVries, Janice Thompson, Theresa Cunningham, Elizabeth Thompson, Allen Simioni, Ivan Matanic. Seated: Nancy Gardner, Rosie Sojko, Janice Drinkwalter, Suzanne Stevenson, Karen Burcombe, Janice Nicks, Pauline Lynch, Karen Reidt. Missing - Cathy Griese, David Laing, Garry Martin, Paul Bethel, Charles Aldwell.



## Editor's Notebook



## Any homes for the homeless?

Are we so callous and indifferent that itinerant homeless people must sleep outdoors in below freezing weather? There have been disturbing reports out of Toronto where homelessness seems to be of epidemic proportions but this writer has never seen or heard of homeless situations in this neck of the woods, until last week that is.

Friday, I happened to be in Milton just emerging from a place of business when a pleasant young man pushing a bicycle approached.

"Can you tell me what's down that road?" he asked indicating Steeles Ave. West.

"More businesses," I replied.

Any jobs there? Was the next enquiry. Maybe, I said, but I'm not a resident here. Don't know the territory. You looking?

Yeah, he said, but it's Friday and no one's interested in talking to me. I cycled in from Ottawa yesterday and spent the night freezing. I'm tired, broke. Can't find a job and this's another cold night coming. I don't know what I'm going to do. People seem so cold.

Did you ask the police for help? I asked. Yes, he said, they told me to go to welfare. I went to welfare just asking for some support until I found a job. But they told me I had to have a local address before they could help. I have nowhere to turn now. Tried to see my bike. One guy offered me ten bucks. It's worth a lot more.

Do you need a few bucks? I asked hesitantly, knowing some panhandlers had some pretty good stories. Just enough, he said, so I can get a room.

I haven't got that much on me, I said, sizing him up and down before satisfying myself he was what he appeared to be - someone down on their luck. I have him a few dollars which he said would allow him to keep warm in a coffee shop overnight, anyway, instead of freezing in the cold. Wished him luck finding a job the next day.

It occurred to me that really there is no public help for itinerant people of which I am aware. During the depression years "tramps" as they were called then could always get a meal and sleep in the cells at the old town hall for the night but what would they do nowadays in our affluent society? Must they just freeze in the cold?

Any answers?

Some advice from a Mississauga councillor to drivers:

If you're driving after dark and see an oncoming car with no headlights turned on, DO NOT flash your lights at them: This is a new common gang member initiation "game" that goes like this: The new member being initiated drives along with no headlights on and the first car to flash their headlights at him is now his "target". He's required to chase that car and shoot at or into the car in order to complete his initiation requirements.

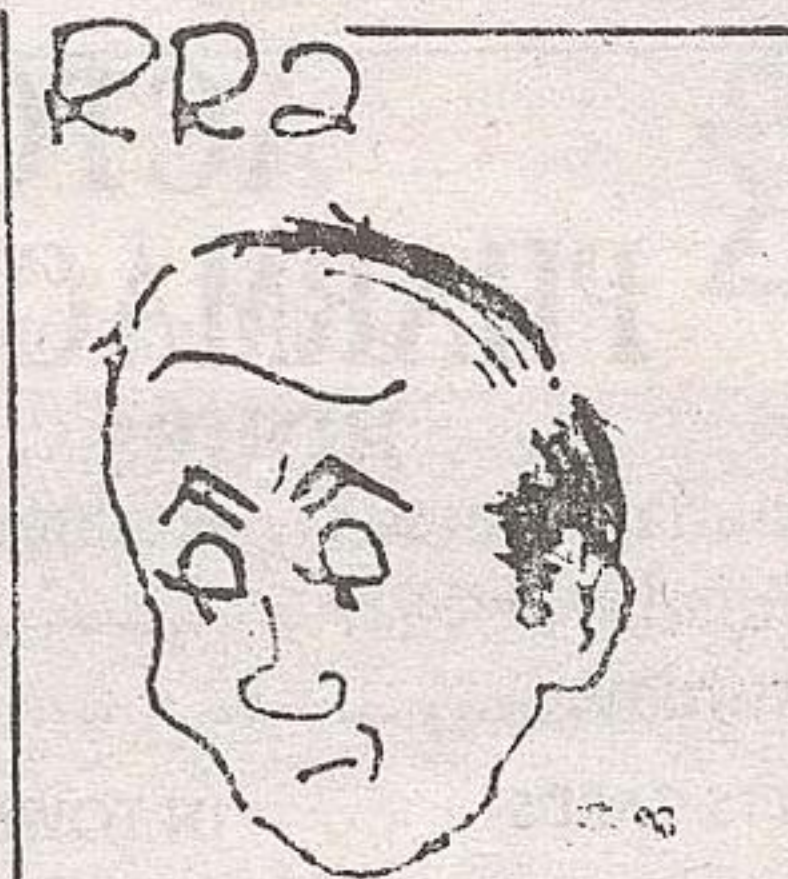
Make sure you share this information with any drivers in your family and anyone else you can," Councillor Pa Saito says.

Chilling information but certainly worthwhile to know and let the police know if you ever see it done.



In all my years in the newspaper business I've never heard so much public discontent over the actions of a Town council as I've heard in the last few days over the demolishing of the old Acton arena. So many people have visited prospect Park and watched the demolition, seen the sturdiness of the buildings, and gnashed their teeth at the senseless destruction of a building which with a few hundred thousand dollars could have been a building that lasted another 50 years.

Monday night our house was one of a number surveyed about the need for an indoor leisure facility for Halton Hills. Needless to say the answer was not positive. Polite, but a firm negative. After all they are just tearing one down.



If modern cars are so great how come there's oil on every parking spot?



# Tanner

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